

THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES:

CONSIDERED

IN AN

A D D R E S S

TO THE

PEOPLE OF EASTWOOD.

BY

THE REV. STEVENSON MACGILL.

G L A S G O W,

PRINTED IN THE COURIER OFFICE, BY W. REID AND CO.

M D C C X C I I.

Ac 911 1792 m24

AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF EASTWOOD,

MY FRIENDS,

THERE are times on which it becomes us to depart from our ordinary road, and by unusual methods endeavour to do good to our fellow citizens. The present seems to me to be a period of this nature: on which I believe myself called upon by the voice of duty, to leave that retired and peaceful walk which I had chosen as most suited to my character and situation, and to address you in this public manner on a subject, which the present alarming conjuncture has rendered deeply interesting to every lover of his country.

A spirit, my beloved brethren, has gone abroad which

seems to me to be a spirit of confusion and darkness; which rising to a greater height, will not only destroy our industry, trade, and unexampled prosperity, but lay our country waste with all the barbarities of civil discord, the miseries of want, and the devastations of men broken loose from the bands of society, the habits of mutual respect, and the sacred obligations of religion. I cannot flatter myself, that this spirit with its gloomy and malignant influences, should not also seek to enter and settle among my people. From a dread of its deceitful arts, and of the fair form, which, like an angel of light, it assumes; from an earnest wish, that whatever be its success in other quarters, the people with whom I am connected may be preserved free from its mischiefs and guilt, I have taken the liberty thus to warn you of its nature, and guard you against its approaches. But mistake me not, my brethren, nor imagine that I will therefore become the advocate of corruption, or the flatterer of power. No, my brethren, though the friend of peace, and the constitution of my country, I will not therefore seek to screen corruptions, nor hesitate to stigmatize them with their true name; neither will I ever stoop to support a cause, because it is the cause of greatness. It is your cause which I support; it is as a friend of the people I address you. Of no party but that of the Prince of Peace, of which many of you have also hitherto professed to be, I would anxiously preserve you in your allegiance to your great Leader; and inspire you with those senti-

ments, which become the character, and constitute the happiness of his subjects on earth as in heaven.

There have been of late circulated through this country, with industrious care, pamphlets whose whole tendency is to infuse into us discontents with our present situation, to aggravate small evils, and depreciate great and long felt blessings; which, by the unreal picture of heated minds and the pert undistinguishing abuse which is unrestrained by decency and sobriety of thought, would inflame us with the desire of new projects, lead us to break the bands of order and peace, and precipitate into anarchy and confusion, all that prosperity and public happiness for which we have been so long distinguished, in order to remedy some partial grievances, or to make trial of some new invented theory of Government. Alas! you have even heard of men so far forgetting their sacred character and the reverence due to the house of God, as to pursue this design in Sermons, and blow from the temple the trumpet of sedition. To discuss questions of politics, is the privilege of every British subject, but it is not the purpose to which the house of God is devoted: and the Minister of religion who abuses the important trust which is given him of instructing men from that sacred place in the things which pertain to the kingdom of Christ, to the purpose of displaying his political talents, distracting his hearers with affairs of government, and teaching them, without qualification, limitation or caution, that by force or threatening only the people have improved the Govern-

ment and redressed their grievances, acts not surely the part of a good Citizen, nor with that benign and heavenly spirit which becomes the situation which he holds and the character which he sustains. The unfortunate spirit which at present prevails, could alone blind the eyes of any good man from the impropriety of such conduct.

I am no Politician, my brethren, nor do I affect to speak as a Judge, on the difficult subject of Government. Even Priestley, a man of sufficient forwardness, thought himself incompetent on this point, and refused, on that account, to become a Member of the National Assembly of France. But in this, and in all matters of difficult speculation, I have ever found Experience my safest guide ; nor have I yet seen wisdom in hazarding substantial and experienced blessings, for the sake of fine spun and untried theories. I have ever found, too, the men whose brains teemed most fruitfully with new schemes, and who adopted instantly and greedily, every new fancy, were generally men of great levity, whose judgments were driven by every impulse of feeling, and whose feelings were the ready dupes of their disordered imaginations : or they were men of unsettled principles, who were urged on by vanity, pride, or resentment of disappointed hopes. While it is the character of true wisdom, and let me add too, of true genius, which never, even in its fictions, violates the order and consistencies of nature, to distinguish betwixt the conceptions of romance,

and the conclusions of reason ; to give to every object a gravity suited to its importance ; to view with calmness attention and a clear eye the whole extent of circumstances, in their order, connexion and event ; to embark with caution upon hazardous enterprizes, nor expose, in the pursuit of splendid trifles, the possession of substantial blessings. It teaches us even to bear with small disorders, rather than by violent or uncertain remedies, expose our constitution to shock and convulsion, and still more dangerous diseases.

To this guide then, let us in the present conjuncture, commit ourselves. Let us seek to remove such evils as we think our situation feels, with wisdom and with temper ; but O ! let us not, for trifles, undervalue and expose to wreck our true good our solid our known and long-felt blessings ; let us not sacrifice a present happiness, for the sake of we know not what, a good which may be only in idea, and which must be attained by the destruction of all that is desirable in life.

Never was this nation so prosperous ; never were the people so blest. Not a man can lay his hand upon his heart, and say that he is suffering under a real grievance. Our liberty and property are protected ; our commerce and manufactures flourish with a prosperity unknown in any period of our nation ; industry pervades all ranks ; employment fills the hands and exercises the powers even of the weakest and most youthful ; the

poorest of the people have abundance ; exuberance and plenty swell the furrows of our land, and health, satisfaction and joy universally prevail: Yet we would throw away these blessings, and with desperate and bloody hands, sacrifice that Constitution under whose venerable protection we have enjoyed such happiness, the work of ages, in which we and our fathers have gloried, to try some new scheme, of the nature, effects and success, of which we are not judges; which must be executed not only by the destruction of our present blessings, but at the expense of peace and order, and safety, the violation of property, the confusion of ranks, the miseries of idleness and want, the ravages of lawless and ungoverned men, the tumults, fightings, distractions, massacres, cruelties, and all the innumerable horrid circumstances of civil war and a dissolved nation: and after sending miseries and deaths with dismay and horror, thus to lay waste our happy country, and wading through this dismal sea and horrid scene, establish we know not what of a Government, which could hardly raise us in its best state to greater prosperity than we now enjoy, and may contain in it evils as great and as numerous as our present are trivial and few. What levity, what madness, what immorality! How much wiser and better that we enjoy with peace and gratitude our present blessings; and that each of us in our different situations and within our own spheres seek to alleviate, or with calmness and moderation to remedy, what appears to us wrong; or, as every state on earth must be mixed with alloy, to bear with a light heart and

a contented soul, partial evils for the sake of general happiness.

There is another guide too, my brethren, which I trust you will reverence with me, and which I have ever found to direct me to the paths of tranquillity and comfort. You will not be surprized when I inform you that this guide is our Bible. With whatever levity and disregard other men may treat this repository of the councils of heaven, we, I hope, will ever receive its instructions with reverence, and count it our happiness and honour, to form our conduct on its rules. Yes, my friends, the instructions of the Captain of Salvation, not only point to that heaven from which he came, but to our truest interests and soundest happiness on earth. And what is the nature of his instructions, what the spirit which He requires of his followers? Is it a spirit of pride, strife and debate, jealousies and evil surmises, disquiet, turbulence and discontent, which delights in depreciating mercies and aggravating evils, indulges in levity, extravagance and invective, despises established authority, mutual respect and subjection one to another, and leads to disorder and to violence? Nay, my brethren, but it is mild and peaceful in its nature, sober, temperate, tranquil, patient, contented, meek; and while removed from the subjection of slavish fear, it views all power as intended by God only for good; it with willingness submits itself to the higher powers and renders with cheerfulness, to all

their dues. It is an enemy to turbulence and to discord, and all that depraved levity which sports with human happiness, and hazards, with regardless ease, the properties and lives of human beings. Forced only by irresistible necessity, violence is its strange work, its last resort, dire and sad compulsion to which with slowness and with sorrow it yields.

Let us hearken, my brethren, to the words of inspiration.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God. These six things doth the Lord hate, yea seven are an abomination to him; a proud look, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies and him that soweth discord among brethren. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water, therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with. Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another: but if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Who then is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against

the truth ; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable ; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace. And as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same *office*, so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Wherefore we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. Render therefore to all their dues---tribute to whom tribute, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. My son, say^s Solomon, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change ; for their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them. And I beseech you, says the Apostle Paul, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord,

This is not the spirit of passive obedience, but of wisdom and brotherly love. It is that sobriety of mind and heavenly charity, which envieth not, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; which at once shows us our liberty and

guards us against its abuse; which, infinitely superior to that weak spirit of pride which would refuse respect to superiours, and destroy the distinctions of nature, and the necessary and beautiful subordinations of society, teaches us respect to one another, according to our different situations, employments and offices, from the consideration of our mutual dependence, our relation as brethren and our connexion with one another, as members dedicated to different offices in one great body. For the body, says the Apostle, is not one member but many---it consists of various parts in different situations and destined to different uses. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing, if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him. And the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet I have no need of you. That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. From this too, we learn the true notion of Equality, so far as it is founded in nature and acknowledged by society: not an Equality of Rank, which is impossible while nature endows men with different talents, virtues and advantages, and while society requires different offices and departments; but that mutual respect and security of rights, which arises from the necessary dependence of one order upon another, with a free power granted to every subject to rise

to such rank sphere and department, as his abilities, diligence and good fortune, enable him to fill. And thanks be to God, such Equality do we enjoy. Every man has his liberty and property secured, as far as the imperfections of human government permit: And every day we see the able and industrious citizen, from the lowest order in society, rising to affluence and honour, and leaving as an inheritance to his children, the property, and the rank which his virtues acquired.

I wish not, my brethren, to enter into any argument upon abstract doctrines, of which you and I, unaccustomed to such speculations, may not be competent judges. I wish to direct your attention to plain facts, of which we can all form an opinion, and from them lead you to a spirit of gratitude and contentment. Yet there are principles maintained in some of those publications to which we have alluded, of so false and dangerous a nature, that I think it my duty to pursue still farther my observations.

In these works it is maintained that a majority has a right to do whatever it chuses to do; that there never was in fact any improvement made in our Constitution, but by the people using force or threatening; and to make their principles and arguments bear upon some object they confound, with art and industry, our situation with that of France before its Revolution, speak of Revolutions as matters of the simplest nature and easiest ex-

ecution; and some of them, with affected slyness, saving clauses and insidious praise, others, with more openness and avowed intention, recommend the conduct of France to the imitation of Great Britain.

Now, my friends, for a few moments, attend to the falsehood of such principles, and to the dreadful gulph into which such reasonings would plunge us.

The majority of a nation have a right to do whatever they chuse to do. They have a right then to break the laws of truth, of justice and humrny. They have a right to erect a standard against the Sovereign of the Universe; to force men to receive Dagon for their God and fall down and worship him. They have a right to destroy the peace, security and happiness, of their brethren, dissolve at pleasure the bands of society, trample on all laws human and divine, and become robbers, persecutors and murderers, and after driving from their homes the timid and peaceful, cruelly persecuting the weak and defenceless, banishing and murdering all who opposed their opinions, they have a right to put their feet on the necks of their brethren and institute a system of tyranny and oppression—to gratify their own lawless passion and wild caprice, and condemn the rest of the nation to slavery and wretchedness.

It was a majority of the Israelites, you know, my brethren, which would have murdered Moses and forced

Aaron to become the priest of idolatry---It was a majority, which in the first ages drew to the judgment seat, the glorious propagators of our faith, and brought to the stake our brethren in Christ Jesus.---It was the majority in France who, in obedience to their bigotted principles, massacred or drove to the mountains their enlightened Protestant fellow subjects---It is now the majority, who in that unfortunate kingdom, are sporting away the happiness fortunes and lives of thousands of their countrymen. But God forbid that we should ever adopt such principles as render the will of any body of men superiour to the laws of righteousness and truth; and give them liberty to perpetrate with impunity every crime which wild caprice and furious passion dictate. No, my friends, the laws of morality and religion are superiour to all the decrees of men; and without attention to them the majority of a nation will, under the pretence of liberty, become the most savage of despots, a horde of assassins, the lawless authors of the most tyrannical oppression and horrid excesses of cruelty. Power and right are very different ideas, and ought never to be confounded in the speculations of men. The majority may have the power, but they have not the right, more than an individual, to commit folly and to perpetrate crimes. Falsehood, treachery, injustice, oppression, cruelty, profligacy, impiety and irreligion, will not change their nature, nor lose their baseness and guilt, though the majority of a nation, though the whole universe should decree them.

A majority then have no right to do what they chuse to do---they have no right to violate the great laws of reason, morality and religion. It follows, that though they may have a right to change their government when it has become clearly unfit for the purpose of government, yet they have no right to do so at their pleasure, when caprice and passion dictate; because it never can be done but at infinite hazard, and with the certainty of great inconvenience and suffering---when necessity justifies it, even *then* their right is limited; they have no right to pursue even a good object by immoral methods, nor an important object with levity and folly; it is their duty to proceed with caution and prudence and soberness, and to hold sacred the unalienable rights of their brethren. Neither have they in framing a government a right to frame always such as they may chuse. The majority of a nation may be licentious and wicked. They might wish to frame a government which would accord with their wicked views and passions, while it oppressed and injured the virtuous minority. But have they a right to frame such a government? They evidently have not. Nay, my brethren, will you bear with me if I even go farther. I question whether the right to frame a government belongs at all to the majority. The majority of a nation consists of persons who live by labour, and consequently want the means which are necessary to enable them to judge on the complicated and difficult subject of government. Knowledge, experience, attention and peculiar habits of thought, are necessary for this purpose which it is no

disgrace to the generality of mankind not to possess. It is a matter too which requires a leisure, calmness, dispassionate reflection and extensive consideration of circumstances which the great body of a nation, from their situation and habits, are unable to give. Now as no man nor body of men can have a right to violate the laws of prudence, and by their rash conduct to sport away their blessings, and involve themselves and their fellow-creatures in calamitous circumstances, it follows, that the majority, though they may have the power, yet have not the right to take upon them the formation of Government. What is necessary and wise in them, is to trust to the wisdom of those classes of men who are removed on the one hand from the influence of ambition, and on the other from the distractions of popular clamour; whose interests are interwoven with theirs, and from their situation possess knowledge, attention and habits, suited to the important work. Accordingly we find that the majority have in most countries generally had the wisdom to leave the formation and reformation of Government to a minority in the state; and that in those countries where the majority thinks it has a right to do whatever it chuses to do, the most lawless tyranny, anarchy and misery, prevail; anarchy and misery which, without some favourable change of circumstances, will bring the country to ruin drive the people in despair to that despotism against which they had fought, and lead them to detest the form even of solid and rational liberty.

- Thus you see that the rights of a majority are limited, and that they extend not beyond the bounds which reason, morality and religion, prescribe. I think it has been shown farther to be the wisdom and duty of the majority, in other words, of the labouring classes, to leave the formation and reformation of Government to other classes of citizens, who have precisely the same rights and liberties and properties to secure; whose interests are connected with theirs, and in whose hands they will be preserved and maintained with more wisdom, steadiness and attention to the general safety.

But we are informed that there never were in fact any improvements made in our constitution but by the people using force or threatening; and several instances are brought from our history to confirm this assertion. This assertion consists of two parts, that there never was any improvement made but what took its rise from the people; and farther, that this improvement was forced upon the Legislature by violent means. These are evidently intended to weaken our confidence in the Government established in this country, and to shew the people the necessity of violence if they mean to carry their object. But the assertion I conceive in all its parts to be erroneous. It is not true that the improvements, which this writer mentions as made by force, were made by the people; and many important improvements have been made by the power delegated to the Parliament and King, without the interposition of the people even in a

legal and constitutional mode. For there are legal and constitutional modes, though this writer has not chosen to recommend them, by which the people can raise their voice---and seldom will they raise it in vain.

The Magna Charta, which he says was obtained by the threatening of the people, was obtained by the sword of a few great barons. The opposition to the arbitrary encroachments of Charles the First was made, by whom? By the people? No, but by the Parliament itself. It was the Parliament opposed the arbitrary acts of the King; it was the Parliament raised the standard to preserve the liberty of the nation. The glorious Revolution in 1688 was effected chiefly by members of the Legislature; the people at large had no concern in its operation.

And as thus it is not true that such improvements in our constitution as were effected by force, were effected by the interference of the majority of the nation, so neither is it true that in making improvements force and threatening from any quarter, have been always necessary. Many important changes have been made voluntarily and solely by the established Legislature.

In our happy constitution the important power of improving our government, from time to time according to the suggestion of circumstances, is delegated by the people to the Legislature, vested in the King and two Houses

of Parliament. Thus the distraction and discord which must result from frequent appeals to the nation are prevented. While the people have it in their power, by methods wise deliberate and orderly to suggest, according to circumstances such improvements as seem beneficial, and our constitution is enabled to advance to perfection without the destruction of government, the dissolution of the bands of society, the horrors of civil discord, and the rash determinations and passionate deeds to which all great bodies when agitated are liable.

Such powers have accordingly been exercised by our Legislature on many important occasions particular exigences provided against, and great improvements of a lasting nature made, without either force or threatening from the people.

Was it no improvement to change the order of hereditary succession to the crown, limit it to protestant heirs, and teach the sovereign by what right and on what terms he held the reins of government? Yet was not this done voluntarily and solely by the ordinary Legislature? The people had delegated such a power to their representatives, and it was used for their benefit.

Was the abolition of hereditary jurisdictions not favourable to the liberties of the people? Formerly every feudal chief had the arbitrary disposal of the liberties and properties of those who dwelt on his domains. His ar-

bitrary court sat in judgment even on the lives of his fellow subjects. He reigned the little tyrant of the plains. His castle was filled with implements of war, ministers of vengeance, and rooms of darkness. Arrayed with the thunderbolts of destruction, and surrounded with the raised works and the iron gates, the deep drawn ditch and nodding towers, ensigns of distrust and midnight fear, it scoulded terror and filled with awe the humble dwellers of the valley. This, my friends, was a tyranny more oppressive than any from which this nation ever was freed ; more destructive of the liberties and prosperity of the people than any against which they ever rose and fought. Other oppressions were temporary and scarcely felt by those who, living at a distance and in the lowly vale, escaped the storm which burst on the inhabitants of the hill. But this was tyranny which reached the cottage and overtook the meanest and most defenceless ; entered into families, and disturbed those joys which heaven hath made our chief on earth, and enabled man of all others to call his own. And who delivered us from this oppression---the people by force or threatening ? No, it was our Legislature alone, by a peaceful and deliberate decree. It decreed that no man should be tried but by the judges of his country, no crimes punished but by the sentence of juries of fellow subjects---juries the great palladium of liberty, the distinguishing privilege of Britons.

Yet still our civil liberty was incomplete while the Judges were dependent on the Sovereign. While in this

situation they might be tempted from fear of their office, to fashion their decrees by the will of the King or men in power. It was necessary for the security of the subjects, that the Judges should be rendered independent. And who made this great improvement ? The people by force or threatening ? No, but the Legislature, and what is more, at the request of the Sovereign himself. He voluntarily made the Judges independent of himself and fixed them in their offices for life.

The very last session of Parliament afforded an instance to confute the doctrine of this gentleman. He will not deny but the act which respects libels, in which the juries were made judges both of the fact and of the application of the law, was an improvement in civil government and favourable to liberty : Yet this was made without either force or threatening---without even the interference of the people by the constitutional method of address.

Thus you see how ill-founded the assertion is, that no improvements have been made in government but by the people using force or threatening : You see on the contrary that such changes as have been produced by violent means originated not from the body of the people ; and that many of the most important nature have been made by the spontaneous operation of that vivifying and renovating power which the nation has originally breathed from itself into the heart of its constitution.

To apply such principles to a direct object, and bring them as it were into action, others of this class of writers have proceeded still farther, industriously magnified small evils into insupportable grievances, confounded our situation with that of France before its Revolution, and speaking of Revolutions and the formation and establishment of new Governments with affected ease, recommended an imitation of France to the people of Britain.

But can such misrepresentation for a moment mislead you? Alas, it could not for a moment, had they not first, by aggravated pictures and declamation on popular topics, inflamed your passions and through their means sought to blind your judgments. But arrest your attention and look around you; Retire from the din of clamour, and with calmness consider the situation of your country. And then say whether it deserves to be likened to the situation of France; or if our free and manly constitution, which has been so long the admiration of the world and the pride of Britain, is to be compared with the antiquated, feeble, capricious and arbitrary Government which had ruled over that unfortunate nation. Is it necessary for me to remind you that the Government of France was an arbitrary Monarchy, in which the will of the Sovereign was uncontrouled and unlimited: That his ministers were not responsible: That he could act without the advice of council; That he could apply the public money and public power, without the consent of the nation or check or controul, to what purposes he chose: And

that thus the nation had no security for good Government, and the proper direction of its powers and its treasures, nor any restraint or remedy for the impulses of folly and passion—Is it necessary for me to remind you that civil liberty, an object of still more importance lay, in a state still more oppressed and debilitated? There was no proper power to frame laws suited to the necessities and circumstances of the subject; and the laws which were framed were still more imperfectly and arbitrarily executed. The Monarch was able to dispose, at will, of the liberties, properties and lives of, his subjects. His spies were in every quarter, almost in every family; and citizens were often dragged to punishment, without trial and without resource, sometimes without the knowledge of their crime. The judges depended wholly on the court. There were no juries of impartial and chosen subjects, to whose unbiased judgments the liberties and lives of men might be committed. Feudalism too reigned with unrelenting severity over the country: the most monstrous and absurd privileges belonged to their nobles: and the liberties and properties of the vassals were subject to the caprice and passion of their dissolute masters. The rights of conscience were violated: The absurdities of Popery only were tolerated: A Protestant enjoyed not even the rights of burial; much less the exercise of religion. The Press groaned too under oppression, and men dared neither to speak nor to write but as an arbitrary and bigotted court gave permission. The consequence was, that the nation

was reduced to a state of beggary : the country was depopulated : the inhabitants were oppressed and starved.

In such a state a revolution was necessary, though effected by force and at the expense of blood, in order to secure the happiness of the present and future race ; and had it been conducted in a wise manly and moral manner, would have been approved of, and considered as a great event, by the true friends of liberty and good government.

But so far were the people of France from confounding our situation with theirs, that they held up the Constitution of Britain as a pattern to imitate. From their singular circumstances they were obliged perhaps in some particulars to deviate from it ; and in others they might be led to a difference from the propensity of human nature to pass hastily from one extreme to its opposite. But though I pretend not to be a competent judge in such subjects, yet it appears to me that those parts in which they differed most materially from our constitution, were the prime causes of the weakness and instability of the Government, and finally of that anarchy and those dreadful excesses into which their country is now plunged. Their jealousy of the executive power brought it into a state of weakness and complete dependance on the National Assembly ; which again was subject to all the confusion, hasty determination, inconsistent decrees, frenzes and fits of enthusiasm of a great popular body.

And these were wholly unrestrained. The Members were not accountable like Ministers for their rash speeches, their passionate and thoughtless decrees; and wanted the checks and salutary restraints of an Upper House, and the colder temperature of men who breathed in another atmosphere, and moved in a different sphere.

How then can men have the hearts to confound our situation with that of France before its Revolution? Run over in your minds all the evils of the ancient Government of that country; and you will find that from all of them our constitution and our situation are free.

Our King has no absolute authority: He can govern only by the authority of laws; and these laws are formed by the delegated wisdom of the nation. He can pass no decrees but by the advice of council; and his counsellors are responsible with their heads for the advice which they administer. He can impose no taxes; these can only be imposed by men who are subjects like ourselves and must bear a part in every burden; the express purpose too for which they are destined must be first assigned, and the application afterwards accounted for. He can declare war with the advice of Council, for which advice it is answerable; but the Parliament alone can grant the supplies, and as we saw lately in the case of Russia, can even by its backwardness counteract the determination of the Sovereign and his Council. The King and his Council appoint our officers, form our plans and carry on our

wars: thus secrecy dispatch consistency and force are given to our designs; and we are preserved from the rashness of determination, the distraction and inconsistency, the frequent retardations, and the power of ambition and intrigue, to which all popular assemblies who are without controul and check, and who are intrusted with the sovereignty are liable: While on the other hand the responsibility of Ministers and the impossibility to carry on plans long against the decided wishes of the nation, secure, as far as the imperfection of human Governments permits, deliberation and integrity.

Our civil liberty exists in still higher perfection. Over this no man nor body of men has power: the meanest subject is as free as his Sovereign. The rights the properties, the lives of every individual are protected. There is no danger to the happy sons of Britain from the hand of power. In peace and security they live under their own vine and fig-tree; and with a light and fearless heart pursue the objects of their station and enjoy the blessings of providence. The guilty, the disorderly, the disturbers of the quiet and rights of their brethren have alone reason to fear. A fair defense and open trial are the privilege of every subject: impartial laws decide his fate; and his fellow subjects and equals, of fair character, sound judgments and hearts bending to mercy, alone can find him guilty. There are no tyrannies of feudalism to disfigure our land, bear down the spirits of the husband-

man and infringe our liberties. The vassal is independent and free as the lord ; and the first departments are open to subjects of every rank who by abilities education circumstances and habits of life are qualified to fill them with propriety. The rights of conscience are sacred ; and a liberal toleration is granted to every inhabitant to worship God and to profess his principles as his conscience and understanding dictate. At the same time to guard against the abuse of liberty ; to provide sound instruction for the ignorant in morality and religion ; to preserve them from the follies of superstition and the gloom of enthusiasm ; to moderate and counterbalance the effects of levity, caprice, and the wild and dangerous errors which will be ever springing up in the field of liberty ; to preserve a sense of real religion which if left to the generality to care for might be neglected and lost ; to give encouragement to those parts of learning which the scripture revelation absolutely require to be cultivated ; and to provide men qualified by knowledge abilities and character to explain and enforce the great truths of religion, and preside with propriety in the assemblies of devotion---a particular form of Christianity of a rational and scriptural kind is established by law ; and men possessed of certain important qualifications are encouraged to study the truths of religion, devote themselves to its service, watch over the spiritual interests of the people and engage in the noble work of advancing the kingdom of righteousness and of heaven among men.

Thus we are freed from all the evils under which France groaned, and which required a violent effort to throw off. Our situation accordingly corresponds with the excellence of our Government. Commerce and manufactures have risen to an amazing height of prosperity; population increases; riches pour in upon us from all quarters. The sea is covered with our ships. Our merchants are princes and our traffickers among the honourable of the earth. Our towns and villages swarm with busy inhabitants, and resound with the noise of ardent industry. Employment fills each hand of every class and of every age; plenty fills every house, and the board of the labouring man presents now a perpetual feast. Our agriculture corresponds with our commerce. The waste places are turned into fruitful fields; our wilderness is become like Eden, joy and gladness are found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Peace dwells in the cottage. The meadows smile with plenty and varied beauty, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the vallies are covered with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing. The husbandman enjoys the fruit of his labour; his children like olive plants rise round about his table. The voice of music and of gratitude rises from the cottage and spreads its notes through the valley; and the cry of gladness and of hearts at ease responsive echo from hill to hill. To crown all knowledge too with graceful step and enlivening influence treads our plains. The sun of righteousness shines up-

on our lands with a lustre and benignity unknown to the other countries of the earth. Our schools are filled with youth from every rank and every quarter ; and the discoveries of the sons of Britain ; their works of genius, learning science deep reflection and noble thought, have now for ages astonished and enlightened the world.

Such is our situation. A situation so enviable and so happy, that the description of it seems like the painting of some scene of fancy. Yet we appeal to your own experience for its truth : consider again every particular and you will acknowledge that it is a true portrait which has been given of your native country. Some evils we grant may mingle with our blessings ; some defects may attend our happy constitution : and the use of prudent and salutary means to carry our state to still higher perfection is patriotic and wise. But let us never for them endanger our present glorious privileges and substantial blessings ; nor with wanton outrage and imperious scorn shake to the roots that venerable shade under which we have risen and flourished ; least exposed unsheltered we lament too late the loss of its protection ; and the storms of a fiery and convulsed atmosphere scatter our blossoms in the air, throw to the earth our fruits and blast our goodly prospects.

The example of other nations should teach us wisdom. A fertile country laid waste ; the sources of wealth and

industry cut through, and turned into means of desolation ; commerce and manufactures destroyed ; the lands neglected ; the people without employment ; confusion, discord and tumult reigning in every quarter ; the poor crying for bread ; a lawless mob seizing and turning at their will the reins of government ; desperate bands of armed men traversing the kingdom ; brethren butchered in cold blood by brethren ; and families once peaceful and happy flying distracted their homes and their country, to seek in foreign lands, and among a strange people that protection which their native France no longer affords to them. And what the people of that unhappy country are to arrive at after their troubles, and when the period of them shall be, who can tell ? A yoke they had to throw off, a treasure they had to acquire which was worth a hazard. But what shall be our excuse, if free prosperous and happy, with a constitution reared by the wisdom and cemented by the blood of our fathers, improved by the experience of ages and the attention of every succeeding generation, under which we have risen to such a superiority of happiness prosperity and glory, if we should wantonly spurn from us our blessings and plunge into miseries like theirs ?

No, rather let us glory in the Constitution of our country, and with gratitude to indulgent heaven prize high our privileges ; let us reverence that happy government the blessings of which we so long have felt ; and if

by the intrigues of factious men our peaceful land should become a field of contention, let us assemble round that standard which has borne us so often to glory and to victory; repelled at a distance every hostile invader; while it waved over us protection, and shook from its dropping wing the heartfelt joys of peace and liberty.---Finally, my brethren, as we would preserve secure our rights and liberties prosperity and happiness, as we would manifest ourselves to be good subjects and virtuous men, as we would show gratitude to heaven for our distinguished blessings, and not expose to miseries ourselves and fellow-subjects, nor bring upon our heads the blood of thousands living now in peace and safety, let us live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, and give no countenance to men who would violate the peace of our country and break the bands of society by which we are so happily united; let us beware how we despise dominions and speak evil of dignities; and practising every civil and religious duty, let each of us pursue with steadiness the different objects of our station. Let us render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Yea, my brethren, all of you be subject one to another, in honour preferring one another. And do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, holding forth the word of life; and that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, *that I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.*

